

## **THE BEGINNING**

The church began with Jesus.

The people of God worship today because of Jesus. The church is to serve Him and his word, to share the word of God throughout communities of the world and reveal His life changing word.

So the history of Messiah Lutheran Church begins with Jesus and began taking shape in 1898 through the work of Norwegian immigrants. In the fall of 1901 folks gathered to worship and Pastor O.O. Risvold was called to be its first Pastor in 1901.

Charter members of the church were the families of; Nels Nelson, Jacob Wetteland, Ole Eddy, Iver Eddy, A. Thorson, G. Stnerson, Alfred Johnson, Austen Jones and Christ Erickson. On Thanksgiving Day, 1902, the congregation decided to purchase and build a church and parsonage at the corner of Hunter Ave and McDonough St. Purchase price for the lot was \$600.00. The initial church structure was completed in 1903 and the parsonage was not completed until 1912. It must have been joyous occasion for those early immigrants to see their new church home. The first name of the church was "Hauge Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church". The race to share Christ's word throughout the Joliet community has run for over 120 years as Messiah Lutheran Church.

## **AND TODAY:**

The campus on the corner of Houbolt and Jefferson has expanded in 3 stages: First the main Sanctuary was built, then the Fellowship Hall and Sunday school classrooms were added and finally the Family Life Center was added in 2018 creating a Mecca for the community.

Aside from regular Worship services and Sunday school for children and youth, the campus serves:

- 2 homeschool groups
- YMCA morning and afternoon sessions
- Stay-n-Play playgroup for children
- MOPS Mothers of Pre-Schoolers
- Lil Loves, a ministry for underserved mothers and baby
- Mini food pantry

Other organizations that rely and depend on Messiah Lutheran Church for benevolence and participation are:

- Our students attend camp as a group each summer, each Winter for Winter Blast, and the occasional Paintball trip at Center Lake Bible

Camp. Married couples reconnect with each other and their faith at a Marriage Retreat

- We have partnered with Reach Work Camp for 20+ years. The summer of 2012 and 2016 we helped bring a work camp home to Joliet. 200 students from all over the nation gathered at Plainfield Central High school to work at sites in the Joliet and Plainfield area.
- We have partnered with G.O. Ministries since 2010 sponsoring children in the Dominican Republic and sending our own missionaries overseas in 2013 and 2017. (MSM DR trip 2013) Meet our Missionary partners: Brian, Caballo, Elisa. Our Sunday School classes sponsor a little boy and a little girl through G.O. Ministries every month and send gifts, cards and letters, receiving cards, letters and photos in return.
- We are partnered with Foundation for His Ministries in Baja, California. Part of our churches tithe goes to fund this ministry and has done so for 15+ years. In the past we have sent members to provide mission work in Baja, California.
- One of our key ministry partners is First Lutheran and Santa Cruz in Downtown Joliet. Among many things they are building a Spanish speaking congregation in the area and provide the Blessing Bench Food Pantry, a recognized agency of the Northern Illinois Food Bank.
- We provide meals for and sponsor the work of Daybreak Shelter for the people of Joliet and the surrounding area.
- We support the community and provide school supplies through Morning Star Mission.
- Our members and Youth often volunteer at Feed My Starving Children
- If you are caring for a loved one nearing death Joliet Community Hospice located just down the street from Messiah Lutheran is your next call. Be sure to tell them that you would like the pastors at Messiah to help in your loved ones care. Our members are active volunteers at the center. You might also consider learning more

about Messiah Memory Bear Ministry.

- All of the offerings gathered during worship at Messiah are tithed (the first 10% of all gathered is given away) to ministries throughout the community and world. In addition to those mentioned above we support Gideon's International, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Joliet Junior College and St. Francis.

Annually we host Vacation Bible School for as many as 200+ children of the community, most of whom are not affiliated with Messiah and over 100 volunteers. Jesus is felt during the 5 days of VBS every year.

Some Ministries and Life Groups hosted by Messiah are

- Messiah Kids Sunday school, 11am Kids and Wednesday evening programs
- Insight, a weekly adult Sunday school class
- Messiah Adults Connect for members and friends to connect outside of Messiah
- O.W.L.S Older Wiser Loving Seniors gather for fellowship and food and to stay connected
- Mosaic for young adults 19-29 to help each other navigate this period of life
- Encore for those active 55 and older looking to connect and have adventures
- Faith and Body Challenge is a weekly program helping participants stay active
- The Landscaping club continues to beautify the campus with plants, trees and flowers
- Meal Train exists to provide meals to anyone going through a transition, job loss, loss of a loved one, illness
- Quilters make beautiful quilts that are being sent to Lutheran World Relief who distribute these quilts to war or poverty ravaged countries
- Memory Bears create stuffed animals from clothing of a loved one who passed to comfort those who are grieving
- Prayer Team prays for and over many people who ask for prayers

